

THE DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA EMERGENCY

Emergency Transportation and Evacuation



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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Carol Schwartz, Chairperson

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Chairwoman Schwartz and members of the Public Works and Environment Committee. I am Dan Tangherlini, Director of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and serve as an alternate member of the WMATA Board of Directors. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to discuss DDOT's emergency preparedness efforts, and update you on our ongoing efforts to prepare and respond to incidents impacting our city and region.

In recent months, we have witnessed several unique and extremely tragic events. These events include the bombing of the London Subway System and the current devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast. These incidents while, far from directly affecting the District, have provided District emergency planners with new lessons learned as we continue to update our preparedness planning and regional coordination efforts in addressing major incidents. The experiences of London and the Gulf Coast yet again, remind us of the importance of emergency preparedness and the need to continuously update, train and exercise our plans.

Both of these events, while widely different on the surface, demonstrate the importance of transportation to a community during an emergency. DDOT

has committed itself through its Emergency Preparedness and Risk Management Office to ensure that our emergency transportation plans represent best practices and reflect regional coordination. Since 9/11, DDOT has developed a comprehensive transportation plan, one that addresses issues of evacuation coordination and traffic operations. This plan also recognizes the important role our transit system will play during an emergency.

The most important element of any plan is communication. DDOT continues to emphasize the importance of following government and first responder messaging when reacting to a perceived or actual event. Whether the message is to shelter-in-place or evacuate, DDOT is committed to ensuring District citizens and visitors are getting to safety in a quick and effective manner.

Since 9/11, DDOT has coordinated with a number stakeholders including WMATA to prepare for emergencies impacting our transportation network. We have developed coordination plans, installed over 100 traffic management cameras for everyday and emergency use, designated

emergency routes with distinctive signs and distributed our multi-lingual Emergency Transportation Tips Brochure throughout the city and region.

A coordinated emergency evacuation traffic signal timing plan has also been developed for the designated emergency routes. Recently, DDOT conducted a test of several emergency routes at the conclusion of the July 4th celebration. This test, named “Operation Fast-Forward”, was the first of its kind in the country, and successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of these routes. In addition, this test showed the need to continue testing and developing traffic management plans for all of the emergency routes. DDOT will use this exercise to develop baseline traffic data to better gauge the time savings associated with the expedited traffic signal plan.

DDOT also recognizes that the evacuation challenges faced in New Orleans have been a concern to many. While the District of Columbia does not face the same geographic challenges that impacted New Orleans, clearly there are real-life scenarios that can impact the District and region resulting in a major evacuation. While DDOT has identified the WMATA system as a major mode of transportation in moving people during an evacuation, as Hurricane

Katrina recently proved, we recognize the need for supplemental transportation services that can serve on a neighborhood level.

In the District Response Plan (DRP), a number of District agencies have been identified to provide vehicle support in evacuating special populations, particularly those without private transportation. These agencies include the Departments of Health (DOH), Human Services (DHS) and Parks and Recreation (DCP&R). DDOT has also worked to develop a web of potential equipment providers from surrounding jurisdictions and transit services. DDOT will also begin further coordination with other non-profit organizations and private transportation companies to identify additional resources to support this effort.

Additionally, DDOT is now analyzing census data and information from our Department of Motor Vehicles to determine what areas in the District have high concentrations of residents without cars. We will adjust our plans for the use and deployment of buses based on this analysis. More importantly, we will continue to work with the District's Emergency Management Agency (DCEMA) to ensure our emergency preparedness training and education is much more specifically tailored to address neighborhood-

specific issues, so that individuals understand explicitly what they need to do in the face of an evacuation of their neighborhood.

As part of its contingency plan, DDOT has also developed a strategy should Metro rail not be operable. To supplement the DRP, DDOT has developed the Emergency Transportation Annex (ETA). The ETA outlines the surface transportation plans, procedures, staff, and organizational structures that should be used during an evacuation. This document, developed in coordination with local, state and Federal partners, identifies transfer points for people to collect at to access Metro bus. DDOT has identified preliminary transfer points throughout the city that are close to Metro rail stations, provide a level of cover from the different weather elements, and are easily accessible to Metro bus.

Lastly, DDOT received funding to conduct scenario-based evacuation simulations and a Regional Walk-Out Plan. The development of these plans will allow the District to make critical decisions related to evacuation strategies and provide the opportunity to identify potential impacts from various emergency scenarios. Strategies developed through the simulation process will be incorporated into a “playbook” for possible events. This will

allow the District to provide stakeholders' with information for informed decision-making.

Councilwoman Schwartz this concludes my testimony. Again I would like to thank you and the committee for the opportunity to testify. I am available for questions.